



**THE ENGLISH THEATRE
OF HAMBURG**

presents

MURDER BY MISADVENTURE

by
Edward Taylor

STUDY GUIDE

Premiere on 12th September 2024

Preview performances at reduced prices on 9th, 10th, and 11th September 2024

Tuesday – Saturday 19:30

selected Sundays 14:30

Wednesday/Friday 11:30 (Matinee performances weekly alternating)

THE ENGLISH THEATRE OF HAMBURG

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TICKETS

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The English Theatre will premiere **MURDER BY MISADVENTURE** on 12th September 2024, with the usual preview performances at reduced prices on 9th, 10th and 11th September. You can use the cover of this publication to advertise the play in your school or workplace. Bookings have already started. Teachers who wish to preview the play before bringing a group of Tstudents to the theatre should contact marketing@englishtheatre.de

About the Playwright

Edward Taylor, the well-known radio producer and playwright, was born in 1931 in Thorpe Bay, Essex, England. After attending Southend High School, he served in the Royal Air Force for two years. Later, while a student at Cambridge University, he wrote for the university newspaper and participated in amateur dramatics. During this period his play **BETWEEN THE LINES**, performed at London's Scala Theatre, became so successful that he was offered a job as writer and producer at the BBC where he worked for the next 36 years. Among the 2,300 radio programmes he wrote for the BBC, his best known was "The Men from the Ministry", which was broadcast between 1962 and 1980, and which included 144 episodes. The programme was also produced in Finland, Sweden and South Africa. Edward Taylor has written successfully for the theatre as well. His stage thriller **MURDER BY MISADVENTURE**, after enjoying a long run in London's West End, has been performed in theatres all over the world. In addition to **NO DINNER FOR SINNERS** (produced at The English Theatre of Hamburg in the 2015-2016 Season) his other plays include **PARDON ME, PRIME MINISTER, PORTRAIT OF FEAR, A RISE IN THE MARKET** and **DIE LAUGHING**.

About the Play

MURDER BY MISADVENTURE is one of the many small cast, one set thrillers that first became popular in the twentieth century. Since its beginnings in 1976 The English Theatre of Hamburg has produced a lot of small cast thrillers including **THE MURDER GAME, THE COLLECTOR, DEATHTRAP, CORPSE, MR. FOTHERGILL'S MURDER, I'LL BE BACK BEFORE MIDNIGHT, DANGEROUS OBSESSION, THE EX-ORCISM, SLEUTH, CAT'S-PAW, VERONICA'S ROOM, STONE COLD MURDER** and **DEATH KNELL**. Because of their popularity many theatres have included small cast thrillers in their seasons. In addition to their popularity, they are economical, an important consideration for almost every theatre because unlike mysteries and thrillers that preceded them historically (like most of Agatha Christie's plays) with large casts, the small cast thrillers are less expensive to produce for obvious reasons. **MURDER BY MISADVENTURE** was first produced in London in 1992. It has remained popular to this day and theatres all over the world have included it in their repertoire.

According to Wikipedia, "death by misadventure is the recorded manner of death for an accidental death caused by a risk taken voluntarily." Edward Taylor has his character Harold Kent devise a way of killing his writing partner so that it will look like he died due to a misadventure. Things don't always work out the way they are planned, however, as audiences will find out when they see the play. It is full of surprises and twists that keep one guessing right up to the final curtain.



SUMMARY

ACT ONE

Scene One

The play takes place in Harold and Emma Kent's luxury flat, overlooking the English Channel. They have just recently moved into the top floor of the new ten-floor complex. They are the only occupants on the top three floors, giving them a feeling of complete isolation. When the play opens it is late October. Harold Kent and Paul Riggs are in the flat's lounge. They have been successfully writing together for television for a decade. They do not always agree on everything which causes friction in their relationship. For example, they have been bickering about how a victim should be murdered in one of the teleplays they have already written. Harold thinks the script should stay as it is, with the victim being stabbed, but Paul thinks it would better to have him strangled with a scarf.

While Harold is busy typing away, Paul hides behind a balcony curtain with a scarf in his hands. He wants to demonstrate to Harold why strangling is better than stabbing. He creeps out from behind the curtain with a scarf rolled up thin in a strangling manner. He catches Harold off guard and quickly puts the scarf around his neck. Shocked by this trick, Harold cries out and desperately tries to remove the scarf. Paul, of course, does not want to kill his writing partner, just to prove his point. He releases the scarf and sits on the sofa to finish his half-full glass of whisky.

Harold's wife, Emma, has heard her husband scream and enters to ask what is going on. Harold explains that Paul was only trying to prove a point. The two men continue to bicker about which is more effective, stabbing or strangling. Paul finally gives up but insists that Harold listen to an original idea he has for a new teleplay. Harold explains that he cannot concentrate on new work because he is going to America in two weeks with Emma and doesn't have the time. He says both he and Paul must work on rewrites on a teleplay they wrote called "The Vice Squad." Paul refuses to help with the rewrites because he feels telling Harold about his idea

for a new teleplay is more important. Harold decides to listen to Paul's idea just to humour him.

Paul wants to call the new work "Murder by Misadventure." He says it involves a man who wants to kill his business partner, so he asks him to go mountain climbing with him. The would-be murderer is an expert mountain climber, but the man he wants to kill is inexperienced in climbing. The two climb a mountain and the victim is led to a place where he remains stranded in the bitter cold. The murderer leaves his victim and returns to civilization. He reports that the man is missing, then leads a search party around in circles until they eventually find the man dead from hypothermia. He is assumed to have gone off hiking on his own. There is no sign that anyone else has anything to do with his death.

Harold suggests that Paul start work on his original idea while he and Emma are in the States and suggests that it is time they took a break from each other anyway. Paul doesn't want to work separately. He points out that he is the one who always comes up with the ideas and Harold does the research, the "donkey work" as he puts it. Harold has become fed up with Paul's aversion to work and his unpredictability. His heavy drinking has also irritated Harold. Paul reminds Harold that he is about to spend six weeks in the States on holiday and that is all the break he needs. Harold explains that they have been working together for so long that he thinks they might be getting a little stale. He points out that they can work together occasionally, but not necessarily 52 weeks a year. Paul refuses Harold's suggestion that they work only part time together. Harold tells Paul that he believes "Murder by Misadventure" can be a stage play if the action takes place in an urban setting rather than on a mountain.

Emma interrupts the two men again because she has a problem getting the new oven to function and needs Harold's help. Harold looks through his desk to find the brochure that explains how to work the new oven and goes to the kitchen to help his wife.



When Harold returns the two men argue again about whether they should continue to work together. Paul absolutely refuses to work on his own or with anyone else. He pleads with Harold to let him continue to work with him because without Harold he knows he'll end up drinking in pubs and thinking of great ideas for teleplays that he can't write alone. When Paul realizes that Harold is serious about them splitting up, he warns his partner that if he can't work with him, he will ruin Harold's life. He reveals to Harold that he knows of a financial crime that Harold committed when he used to work as an accountant for the firm Mortimer-Cooke's, and he has a letter to prove it which he took from Harold's desk in the past. The letter will be enough to blackmail Harold if he refuses to work with him. Harold becomes irate. He calls Paul "a miserable bloody bastard!" and grabs him by the throat.

Emma enters and assumes they are play acting as they seemed to be doing earlier with the scarf. She interrupts what could have turned into a serious fight and asks if Paul is staying for lunch. He says no and prepares to leave.

Knowing now that he will be blackmailed if he doesn't work with Paul, Harold reluctantly agrees to continue their partnership. After Paul leaves the flat, Harold tells Emma that Paul intends to blackmail him if they don't continue to work together. Emma asks what he is going to do about it. Harold answers that he is afraid he is going to have to kill him, and that Paul has just suggested a rather clever way to do it by outlining a plot for a new teleplay that he wants to call "Murder by Misadventure."

Scene Two

Two weeks later. The Kents are about to leave for their six-week holiday in America. Harold is at his desk cleaning a revolver which he puts in a desk drawer when the phone rings. It is his secret lover who has been told she should not call Harold at the flat because Emma might answer the phone. He assures his "darling" that he will be gone for only six weeks, and the time will go by fast. When Harold hears Emma returning to the flat from shopping, he quickly gets off the phone.

Harold asks Emma if she got the sleeping pills that he told her to buy. She says she is scared about Harold's intention to murder Paul. He tells her to calm down, that it's the only way to get rid of the blackmailing bastard. She thinks Paul must have been surprised when Harold invited him to house sit for six weeks while they are in America. Harold explains that he told Paul that Emma was afraid of burglars, and he offered Paul a large amount of cash to make sure he wouldn't refuse the invitation. He takes a bottle of whisky from the bar and funnels some of the sleeping pills into the bottle, explaining that whoever finds Paul must believe he was drunk, or he wouldn't have done anything so stupid as to lock himself out on the balcony to freeze to death. They will be beyond suspicion because he and Emma will be thousands of miles away in America. He tells Emma to put the rest of the pills in the coffee as a backup but then he discovers he cannot find the pill bottle. He is sure he put it on the bar. After searching the room Emma finds it on a table. Harold is beginning to think they have a poltergeist in the flat because it is the third time something like that has happened in the past week.

The phone rings again and Harold answers it. This time it is his agent, Colin. He tells Colin it is doubtful that Paul will go to the ceremony to pick up the award they have just won for a teleplay, so Harold will fly back from the States for a day just to collect the award.

The front doorbell rings and Emma goes to answer it. Harold hangs up the phone as Paul comes in with a holdall and a travel bag. Harold assures Paul he won't have to travel for the next six weeks unless he wants to because he is sure to feel comfortable in their flat. If he can't stand the silence Paul says he may have to break one of the soundproof windows, just to hear the odd seagull. Harold cautions him not to try it because the windows are also breakproof. He tells Paul to put his things in the guest bedroom. Before going, Paul removes three bottles of whisky from his bag and puts them on the floor. He leaves a fourth bottle in his bag and asks Harold to pour him a drink while he goes to the bedroom with his luggage.

Harold puts two of Paul's whisky bottles on the bar and takes the third one to the balcony. Sliding open the balcony door, he steps outside, opens the bottle, and empties half the whisky over the railing. Then he recaps the bottle, puts it on the floor of the balcony, steps back



into the room and slides the door shut behind him. Emma enters the lounge from the kitchen and complains that Harold's golf bag full of clubs has been cluttering up the hall. Harold takes the bag and puts it in a cupboard. Emma begs Harold to try one last time to persuade Paul to write separately from him. He says he'll try but it will be useless. As Emma goes to the kitchen to make coffee, Harold tells her to bring it to the lounge in about five minutes.

Paul returns to the lounge from the bedroom and makes himself comfortable on the couch. Harold gets the bottle of whisky with the sleeping pills from the bar and pours Paul a large glass of whisky. He points out that the balcony doors are the same as the windows in the flat (breakproof and soundproof) and that the doors lock automatically when closed from either inside or outside. He assures Paul that there will be enough food for him because Emma loaded the fridge and the freezer. He even bought Paul a book, "House of Death," which he thinks he'll enjoy. If he needs anything else Harold assures him there are shops in the village as well as three pubs and an off-licence.

When Paul remarks that his glass is empty, Harold quickly fills it with more whisky with the sleeping pills. He asks Paul about Valerie Knight, a young woman Paul had been seeing. Paul says they broke up months ago and adds that she was a real horror and even took drugs. He says he may invite the writing student, Martin Whittaker, to the flat for company. Whittaker wrote to Paul thanking him for the notes that Paul sent him regarding one of Whittaker's plays. Feeling flattered, Paul has decided they should meet for a chat. Harold suggests that Paul try writing with Whittaker, but Paul insists defiantly that Harold is the only one he wants to write with. Harold tries again and again to dissuade Paul from this obsession, but he can't get him to change his mind.

Emma enters with the coffee tray and puts it on the coffee table. Harold pours Paul a cup. Paul asks Harold where the book is that he bought for him. Harold says it is on the desk, but Paul cannot find it there. Emma finds the book on the bar. Harold is baffled as to how it got there, and he thinks again about a possible poltergeist in the flat.

Paul is beginning to feel funny about the taste of the coffee. Harold puts his mind at ease by offering him a glass of Dimple Haig, Paul's favorite whisky. Harold instead takes the bottle of whisky with the sleeping pills, masks it

from Paul and pours what he will think is Dimple Haig. Harold takes the glass of whisky onto the balcony and persuades Paul to join him there by telling him he has the key to the plot for "Murder by Misadventure." That makes Paul curious enough to stagger out onto the balcony. Emma turns away, unable to look at what is about to happen.

On the balcony, Harold explains to the drunken Paul how they will plot "Murder by Misadventure." They will lock the victim on a balcony in the bitter cold with no way to escape and he will freeze to death. He pushes Paul onto a balcony chair, quickly goes inside the flat, closes the sliding door which locks automatically. Paul, suddenly aware that he has been tricked, rises and tries to open the balcony door. He realizes he is trapped on the balcony. He yells, "Harold, Harold," but the balcony windows are not only breakproof but soundproof as well, so he appears to be only mouthing the words. Harold closes the balcony curtains. Emma wants to know if he has done it. He answers in the positive and tells her to take the whisky bottle with the sleeping pills, empty it down the loo and then rinse it and throw it away. She asks what will happen if the police discover the sleeping pills in Paul's stomach, but Harold assures her that they are the same ones that Paul takes every night.

Emma admits that she is still scared, but Harold assures her there is no reason to be frightened because they will be far away in America and, therefore, the last ones to be suspected. Emma picks up the bottle and is about to leave when the phone rings. Harold answers the phone. It is the Script Department wanting to know who should get the credit for writing "In for the Kill." Harold says it was written by Harold Kent only. No shared credit with Paul Riggs this time. He hangs up and looks at Emma across the room who stands petrified. The bottle falls from her hand.

ACT TWO

Scene One

It is four pm on a December afternoon, six weeks later. The Kents return from their trip to America. Emma fixes herself a drink. She is frightened at the prospect of seeing Paul dead on the balcony. Harold does his best



to calm her down. Impatient to get it over with, Emma insists that Harold open the curtains to the balcony right away. He does so, but to their surprise there is no sign of a body anywhere. There is, however, blood on the balcony table and some kind of dead bird lies on top of it, probably killed by a larger bird, Harold says. There is also a jacket on the floor in the corner of the balcony. They wonder where Paul is. Emma suggests that he got back into the flat by somehow forcing the lock on the balcony door, but Harold says that is impossible. The only way he could have got off the balcony was to go over the railing and fall two hundred feet down onto the rocks below. He must have committed suicide, Harold concludes, choosing the quick way to go rather than to freeze to death slowly on the balcony.

Harold gets the jacket on the balcony and brings it inside. Emma is shocked to see that it is covered in blood. Harold finds a letter in the jacket pocket addressed to "Miss Valerie Knight," the ex-girlfriend of Paul's. Harold assumes the jacket belongs to her. He doesn't understand how it could have got on their balcony.

The entry phone buzzes and Emma and Harold wonder who it could be. Harold answers the phone. It is a police inspector who insists on coming up to their flat for a talk about something very important. Harold tries to discourage him, but the Inspector will not take no for an answer. Emma panics. Harold tells her she must keep calm. He then puts the jacket back on the balcony, so it doesn't look like they touched anything. Emma takes the suitcases to the bedroom and starts unpacking so everything looks normal.

As Harold closes the balcony door and curtain, there is a ring from the front door of the flat. He opens the door, and a man introduces himself as Inspector Egan. Harold asks to see his I.D. and Egan complies. The Inspector says that Harold's agent told him that Harold would be arriving home this afternoon from the States. Harold offers Egan a drink, but he says he would rather have a cup of tea if it's no trouble. Harold calls out to Emma, who is still in the bedroom, asking her to make a cup of tea for their visitor. She replies that she will make the tea and join them shortly.

Egan informs Harold that he wants to talk to him about his writing partner, Mr. Paul Riggs. Harold asks if anything has happened to him. Egan wants to know why he thinks something has happened to Paul. Harold replies that he can't imagine why else the Inspector would come to see him. Egan suggests other possible reasons for his visit and asks Harold when he next expects to see Mr. Riggs. Harold explains that Paul is living there now and must have slipped out for some reason.

Inspector Egan is curious to know how Harold would react if he told him that his partner was dead. He wants Harold to guess how Paul may have died, but Harold is impatient with the games that Egan is playing with him. He just wants to know what happened to Paul. Egan doesn't answer. Instead, he asks if there is a balcony in the flat and Harold tells him there is one behind the curtains. Egan goes to the curtains and Harold opens them for him. Surprised by the blood he sees on the balcony, he turns to Harold for an explanation. Harold suggests that it looks like a seabird was attacked by one of the big gulls.

Emma comes in with a tray with teacups and cream and sugar on it. She is alarmed to see Egan looking out at the balcony. Harold introduces her to Inspector Egan who then goes out onto the balcony for a better look at what he has seen there. Egan spots a woman's jacket under the balcony table and asks Harold if he recognizes it. Emma quickly interjects that it is hers and that she just left it there because it was so dirty. She asks the Inspector to leave it where it is because she doesn't want dirt brought into the flat. She excuses herself and goes into the kitchen to prepare a pot of tea.

Egan comes back into the flat remarking how cruel nature can be at times. He muses that it would be easy enough for someone to jump over the railing of the balcony and fall to his death onto the rocks below. Harold asks if Egan thinks that Paul chose that way to commit suicide. Egan replies that Paul couldn't have done that because he was shot to death in London four weeks ago. At least it seems he was shot. That's the part they're not sure of, Egan says.

Emma comes in from the kitchen with a pot of tea and



pours Egan a cup. Harold tells her that Paul seems to be dead although the Inspector can't be sure of it. Egan explains that they haven't found the body. When Emma asks Egan what could possibly have happened to Paul, Harold tells her not to expect a straight answer from the Inspector because he's been trying in vain to get one for fifteen minutes. She wants to know why the Inspector thinks anything has happened to Paul. Because the police have been phoning the flat twice a day for three weeks, he replies, but there has never been any response. They were suspicious that something had happened to Paul because a woman named Valerie Knight walked into the Lewes police station and told them she wanted to report that Mr. Riggs had been murdered. Harold asks if she told them who murdered Paul. The Inspector answers, "You Mr. Kent." Both Harold and Emma insist they don't know anyone named Valerie Knight. Egan tells them that Ms. Knight said she believed Paul had been shot by his partner who then dumped the body in the Channel. The police couldn't get anything more out of her because she seemed frightened and disturbed. They took her name and address and promised to make enquiries.

The police also put out a Missing Persons notice to all the stations and got some responses. They were able to ascertain that Paul was in London on the night of November 20, the same night that Harold was in London to collect their writing award. Paul, according to the Inspector, had booked a room in the Cooper's Hotel, and at the bar he made a spectacle of himself arguing with people who didn't believe he was the successful television writer. He was thrown out of the bar for making so much noise. After that, it was reported that there was a loud quarrel going on outside on the street after which two shots were fired. A couple of witnesses said a drunken man was put into the back of a red Sierra by a man of Harold's description who got in the car and quickly drove away. The witnesses, who had been in the Cooper's Bar, said the man who had been shot looked like he could have been Paul Riggs.

Inspector Egan considers Harold a suspect in Paul's disappearance and asks to see Harold's gun. Harold goes to his desk to get it, but it isn't in the drawer where he previously put it. Harold doesn't know what is going on. He knows the absence of the gun makes him look sus-

picious. He swears he has nothing to do with harming Paul, and he points out that there is no proof that Paul was shot or that he even disappeared. He says he's had enough of being held under suspicion for something he didn't do. He threatens to call his solicitor in the morning and angrily tells the Inspector to leave. Egan orders Harold to sit down and shut up. He then apologizes for getting carried away.

Emma reminds Egan that he didn't tell them what happened to Valerie Knight. He replies that they sent someone around to her flat, but she was gone, and they haven't heard from her since. The Inspector decides it is time for him to leave but wants to know one last thing. The people at the bar reported that Paul had told them that Harold wanted to end their writing relationship. He asks Harold if there is any truth to that. Harold replies that that would be no reason for murder. If he wanted to break up the relationship, he could simply stop working with Paul. That answer seems to satisfy the Inspector, but he says he will return tomorrow to see if they have any news about Mr. Riggs. Harold doesn't like this, but he says goodbye and the Inspector leaves. Emma is terribly nervous now. Harold assures her that the police can't prove anything.

The phone rings. Harold answers it and listens. Then he hangs up and tells Emma a man asked what they had done with Valerie Knight's body? They stare at each other as the scene comes to an end.

Scene Two

It is the following morning. Harold is cleaning up the balcony with a mop and pail. The blood and the dead bird have gone, but the woman's jacket is still there. Emma is on the phone dictating a message to Colin, Harold's agent, telling him to call them as soon as he gets to the office. Harold comes in from the balcony and asks if she has reached Colin. When she says no, he tells her to keep trying because Colin is the only one who can possibly tell them something about Paul. Emma asks her husband to close the balcony door because she is freezing. He grunts and takes the mop and pail into the kitchen. When he returns, he tells Emma she would feel a lot warmer if she did something useful like dusting the



furniture. He then spots the word "Murderers" written in the dust on one of the tables. Emma thinks it must have been Paul because it's the kind of thing he would do. Harold believes it was the Inspector who did it as a trick to break them down. He opens a bottle of whisky and pours himself a drink. It's a brand Emma never buys. Harold takes a sip and says it tastes like weed killer. Emma asks him again to close the balcony door, which he does after grabbing the jacket and bringing it inside with him. He takes the jacket to the kitchen while Emma continues to examine the writing in the dust. When Harold returns, Emma tells him the writing looks like his, but he finds that laughable.

The entry phone buzzes. Harold hopes it is not the Inspector, but it is. Harold tells him to come up if he must. Emma thinks they should give the woman's jacket to the Inspector, but Harold doesn't want him examining it.

The doorbell rings and Harold reluctantly lets the Inspector into the flat. Inspector Egan continues to play the cat and mouse game he played with them yesterday. He doesn't answer their questions directly. Instead, he treats whatever they say as suspicious. He tries to entrap Harold into confessing the murder of Paul. He informs them that a man called the police station about the "Paul Riggs Case" and asked if he knew that Harold had committed fraud at the accountant firm where he used to work, and that Paul Riggs was blackmailing him about it. Harold calls the accusation nonsense. The anonymous man who phoned the station also suggested that the police try to find Valerie Knight's jacket. The Inspector catches sight on the floor of an envelope addressed to Ms. Valerie Knight. He assumes it could have fallen out of her jacket because it has blood on it. He demands to see the jacket. Emma admits that the jacket is not hers and that she made a mistake. She gets the jacket from the kitchen and brings it to the Inspector. Egan is satisfied for the time being. He leaves the flat but not before warning them not to leave the country.

After the Inspector has gone, Emma notices Harold's golf clubs are back in the hall. They remember him putting the clubs in the cupboard before they left for America. Harold wonders again if they have a poltergeist in the flat. He gets the clubs and goes to the cupboard to put them

away again. When he opens the cupboard door, he is shocked to see the body of Paul Riggs standing upright with two bullet holes in his body. Emma screams. The body falls out of the cupboard onto the floor. Harold puts a hand on Paul's heart. Just as he does this, Paul's hand comes up and grabs him by the throat. Then Paul releases his hand and stands up. Stunned and frightened by this, Emma must sit down.

Paul calmly goes to the bar and pours himself a whisky. He suggests that he might continue to play dead and let the Inspector arrest Harold for his murder. When Harold threatens to get the porter to come to the flat to witness that Paul is alive, Paul takes a pistol from his pocket and points it at Harold. Harold recognizes the gun as his own. He insists that Paul tell them why he has gone to such elaborate means to convince people he is dead. Paul replies that it is partly to make up for ten years of being exploited by Harold, partly to get back at them for trying to kill him and partly for money. He gets from his pocket an envelope that contains a document with their solicitor's signature. It is a contract covering their working partnership. He reads the important part to Harold. It states that if one of the partners is confined for life to prison, all rights in the work executed to date by the parties together will transfer to the surviving partner. This will mean a lot of money for Paul. He explains that Harold will be confined to prison for murdering Valerie Knight.

It will be a believable story, Paul claims, because Valerie was Harold's mistress. There are dozens of witnesses who saw the two together many times, and Harold was seen "holding hands, stroking her hair, gazing into her eyes..." Emma breaks down on hearing this and exclaims "Oh God, Harold! Damn you! Damn you, you lousy bastard..."

Paul says that the police will hear that Harold began his affair with Valerie after Paul split up with her. But Harold soon discovered that she was a junkie and always wanted more and more money to pay for her drugs. When Harold decided to break up with her, she threatened to tell his wife and even said she would tell the police about his crime at the accounting firm, which Paul had told her about. After hearing this story, Paul believes the



police will conclude that Harold had no choice but to murder Valerie.

The truth of the matter is that when Harold went to America, Valerie started phoning Paul again. She said she was sick of Harold and wanted to get back with him. He finally gave her some money to tell her story to the police about Paul possibly being murdered by Harold, but it didn't keep her from asking for more money. He stopped answering her phone calls. She became wild and kept coming to the Kent's flat, pounding on the door. One day she forced her way in when Paul was leaving to buy some more whisky. She hadn't had a fix for a while and was acting crazy. She came at him with a pair of scissors. He picked up the paper knife from Harold's desk to defend himself. She accidentally ran into the paper knife which went straight through her heart. She died instantly. He took off her jacket and threw it on the balcony.

Harold rushes to his desk to find the paper knife, but it isn't there. Paul says he's hidden it on the balcony. He'll tell the police exactly where it is when they arrive. Furious now, Harold runs out onto the balcony to look for the knife. Paul tells him he'll never find it in a million years. Harold gives up and just wants Paul to tell him how he got off the balcony. Paul reveals that Emma let him off the balcony. Shocked by this, Harold watches Emma walk over to Paul and take his arm. Paul explains that right after Harold and Emma left him to die on the balcony, Emma came back to the flat ostensibly to get her valium, and that is when she unlocked the balcony door. Emma tells Harold that if he hadn't been so self-centered he would have noticed that she and Paul have been lovers for years. Harold calls Emma "a scheming lying bitch" and slumps back against the balcony railing with his head in his hands. With Harold distracted on the balcony, Paul closes the balcony door and says, "Cheerio, Harold—enjoy the fresh air!" When Harold realizes he has been locked out on the balcony to die in the cold, he is horrified. Paul quickly pulls the balcony curtains, so he and Emma don't have to witness Harold's distress. Paul and Emma are pleased at their good fortune and Paul pulls Emma into an embrace.

Egan, having left the front door unlocked when he last

exited the flat, enters now. He hands Paul a bottle of champagne and congratulates him on a very neat job. Paul is not alarmed by the arrival of Egan because in reality he is Martin Whittaker, known to Paul as an actor and would be playwright. He has played many detective roles on stage, so it was easy for him to play the role of Inspector Egan. Paul paid Martin five thousand pounds for his work and promised him that he could possibly collaborate with him on a new TV series.

Paul reminds Emma that her taxi for the airport is due in five minutes, so she leaves to get her case from the bedroom. Their plans are for her to go to Switzerland for a couple of months to avoid any suspicion concerning Harold's death on the balcony. Martin is going to Scotland to work in a repertory theatre for one or two months. Paul plans to go Hollywood to discuss the filming of a teleplay that he and Harold wrote together. The three of them have made a pact to never speak about Harold's "accidental" death on the balcony. When Emma comes back to the lounge, Paul warns her not to return for eight weeks. He tells Martin that he should under no circumstances come back to the flat. Martin assures him he won't because his entire future depends on his chance to become Paul's writing partner. He goes to the door and is the first to leave. Emma picks up her case and says goodbye to Paul. He assures her that he'll join her in Berne, Switzerland in March. She leaves the flat.

Alone now in the lounge, Paul goes to the bar and pours himself a whisky which he quickly drinks and pours another. There is suddenly a whirring machine-like sound coming from the air conditioning. The phone starts ringing but he doesn't answer it. Suddenly the burglar alarm goes off. He panics and thinks that the place is either haunted or that Harold has found a way to trick him. He gets the gun he threatened Harold with earlier and fires two shots at the alarm. It stops and the phone stops ringing. Paul opens the curtains and shouts to Harold that his tricks didn't work, but he doesn't see Harold anywhere. Paul can't believe his eyes. He keeps the gun, opens the balcony door and steps onto the balcony. Harold, who has been hiding in a corner, immediately jumps Paul. There is a desperate struggle as Harold tries to prevent Paul from using the gun. Harold pushes Paul away and heads for the balcony door. Paul shoots Harold who



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staggers to the door which he accidentally slides firm- there is a look of horror growing on Paul's face as he re-ly closed as he falls to the balcony floor. For a moment alizes he is locked outside on the balcony with Harold.

THE END

Study Questions

1. How long have Harold and Paul been writing teleplays together?
2. What does Paul threaten to do when Harold refuses to continue working with him.
3. Whom does Harold involve in his plot to murder Paul?
4. How does Harold plan to murder Paul?
5. Why does Harold think there is a poltergeist in the flat?
6. What do Harold and Emma discover that shocks them when they return from America?
7. Whom does Inspector Egan suspect is responsible for Paul's disappearance?
8. How does Paul reappear in Harold and Emma's flat?
9. What does Paul plan to do to get revenge on Harold for trying to murder him?
10. Why did Emma help Paul escape from the balcony before she and Harold left for America?
11. Who is Inspector Egan in reality?
12. Where do Paul and Emma plan to meet to continue their relationship?
13. What is the fate of Harold and Paul at the end of the play?

Answer Key

1. Ten years. 2. He threatens to reveal to the police a crime that Harold committed in the past. 3. His wife, Emma. 4. By locking Paul outside on the balcony to die in the freezing cold while he and Emma are in America. 5. Because objects in the flat keep turning up in different places from where they were put. 6. They discover that Paul's corpse is not on the balcony as they expected. 7. He suspects Harold. 8. He falls out of a cupboard pretending to be dead. 9. He plans to frame Harold for the murder of Valerie Knight, with whom Harold has been having an affair. 10. Because she and Paul have been secret lovers for years. 11. He is an actor hired by Paul to impersonate Inspector Egan. 12. In Switzerland. 13. They are both locked outside on the balcony in the freezing cold.